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FM AMCONSUL DUBAI  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 9517  
INFO RUEHAD/AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI 1393  
RUEHDE/AMCONSUL DUBAI 2447  
RUEHZM/GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS DUBAI 001847

SIPDIS

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STATE FOR G/TIP, INL, DRL, NEA/RA AND NEA/ARP

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [SOCI](#) [AE](#)

SUBJECT: DUBAI SHELTER NOT CLOSING

REF: A. DUBAI 01455, B. ABU DHABI 00440

SUMMARY: Activist Sharla Musabih refuted press reports that Dubai's only independent women's shelter will be close down. The Dubai Police continue to support Musabih's work and Musabih claims the shelter now operates within the rules of Dubai Department of Islamic Affairs and Charitable Services (DDIACS). Ambassador registered USG concern over the shelter's future with the UAE Minister of Social Affairs. End Summary

Dubai Shelter

12. (SBU) Local activist Sharla Musabih refuted local press reports that the shelter she runs in Dubai will be closed down. The March 24 edition of the Gulf News, an English language daily, reported that the Dubai Municipality was ordering the villa closed due to neighbors' complaints and zoning violations. It also reported that the UAE Ministry of Justice warned Musabih against illegally housing women. However, the March 24 edition of the English language Khaleej Times reported that the Dubai Municipality had no information as to whether a notice of eviction had been sent to Musabih.

13. (SBU) Musabih told PolEconOff March 25 that she is the victim of what she describes as a "smear campaign" orchestrated by the estranged husband of a Syrian woman who is living in the shelter. Musabih said she had contacted the commander of Dubai Police's CID, Brigadier Khamees Mathar Al Masseeri for help. According to Musabih, Al Masseeri promised to contact the Ministry of Justice and the local papers to convey his support for her activities.

Musabih's Shelter Operating Within DDIA Rules

14. (SBU) Musabih said she had recently submitted documents detailing the operation of the shelter that DDIACS had earlier requested (ref A). Juma Obaid Al Falasi, Assistant Director-General of Charitable Services Affairs at DDIACS, then indicated to her that she and her shelter were now operating within DDIACS's rules (ref B).

USG Registers Concerns Over Shelter

15. (SBU) During a March 26 meeting with UAE Minister of Social Affairs, Mariam al-Roumi, Ambassador registered the USG's concern about Musabih and the shelter being attacked by a conservative element that believes that sheltering battered women encourages women in troubled marriages to leave their husbands and could lead to a breakdown in family values (ref A). Al-Roumi responded that she was aware of one husband who blamed her Ministry for the fact that his wife had sought shelter with

Musabih. She told the husband that the Ministry does not license Musabih's shelter, but that "even if the Ministry did license the shelter, it would not be the Ministry's job to interfere. It is between the husband, the wife, and possibly the police."

#### A Wide Range of Victims Sheltered

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16. (SBU) According to Musabih, the shelter, opened in 2001, assisted approximately 100 women and children in 2005. During the year, the reasons people sought shelter changed. In the first half of 2005, the largest groups of women seeking shelter were Uzbeks and Moldovans who had been trafficked to the UAE. The numbers of trafficked women fell off in the second half of 2005, when there was an increase in the proportion of homeless women or victims of domestic violence. Musabih commented that Dubai's skyrocketing rents were hurting the most vulnerable of all nationalities. Among her current tenants are an Emirati divorcee and her two children who had lost their home.

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